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RESTAURANT FACILITY BUSINESS

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How
Schussler Creative
Maintains Its
“Wow” Factor

inside this issue:

- Fire Control Tips
- Effective Bird Control Tactics
- Can Small Vendor Companies Survive?
- Kitchen Range Hood Fire Suppression Systems
- Worn Wood: Replace Or Refinish?

Creative Challenge



Every restaurant's maintenance crew has its own unique challenges. But most restaurants don't have animatronic dinosaurs, 5,000-gallon shark tanks and open-hearth ovens to deal with.

On our cover this issue is Schussler Creative, a retail/restaurant/entertainment concept unlike any other. The brainchild of Steven Schussler, this 6-year-old company is known for its one-of-a-kind attractions and restaurants, such as T-Rex (a dinosaur themed restaurant destination) and Rainforest Cafe, which features waterfalls, foliage, fish tanks, mechanical snakes and alligators, and a talking animatronic tree. Rainforest Cafe now has 45 locations nationwide.

At both T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe, facilities managers must juggle the retail and restaurant portions along with the special challenges of the attraction component. To that end, T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe have their own in-house facilities team at each location. To read more about the unique — and I mean, unique — challenges for this company's maintenance team, please turn to page 14.


This issue also features articles on fire protection, bird control, roofing, wood refinishing, kitchen exhaust cleaning, window film and security. I'd also like to point out an interesting article called "Can The Little Guy

Survive?" found on page 19. In it, author Rick Peltz discusses the difficulties and hurdles that small independent vendor companies face when competing with "the big boys" of the facilities maintenance world. With fresh perspective, Peltz frankly speaks what's on the minds of many professionals in the industry today.

We also have two real estate reviews on San Francisco-based Forklift Brands (page 49) and on Atlanta-based Arby's, which currently has three Market Fresh restaurants in test mode (page 53).

It's not too late to register for RFMA 2007; details are inside this issue, or go to www.rfmaonline.com. RFMA's first stand-alone conference, which is being held February 25-27, 2007 in Frisco, Texas, will cater specifically to the needs of the restaurant facility professional.

It's also not too late to get involved in our February/March issue, which will be distributed at RFMA 2007. Let us help you gain maximum exposure for your company. To advertise, please contact me at scott@francepublications.com. If you would like to write an article, please contact the editor, Katie Foxworth Lee, at katie@francepublications.com.

I hope everyone has a healthy and happy New Year. 

Thanks for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott France". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Scott France
Publisher**

Creativity Is The Engine For Success

T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe use in-house facilities teams to make sure that these special combinations of retail, restaurant and attraction are properly maintained.

By Luci Cason

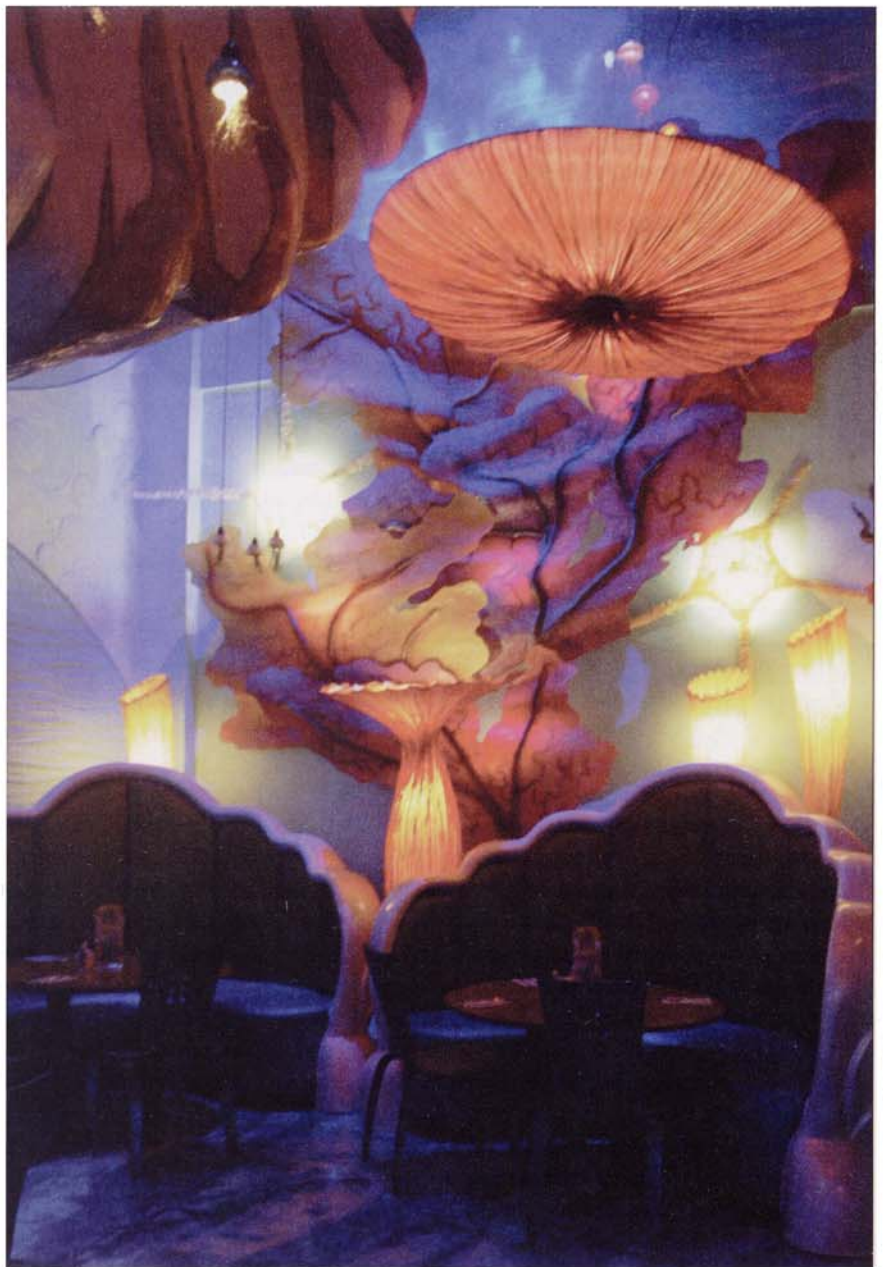
Staff Writer

Steven Schussler's themed restaurant and attraction concepts provide an enjoyable experience for diners and visitors, but they present a set of unique challenges for their facilities managers. Not many facilities managers have to confront waterfalls, animatronics and geysers on a regular basis, but for those working in Schussler-created restaurants, it's all in a day's work.

Steven Schussler formed Schussler Creative in 2000 after selling his popular Rainforest Cafe, which now includes 45 nationwide locations, to Landry's Restaurants. Schussler's Golden Valley, Minnesota, headquarters houses a creative laboratory where new concepts and ideas are created, and prototypes are built and tested. But this is no ordinary test kitchen. More akin to Disney Imagineering, it's a place where Schussler and his employees can not only create sample dishes but also craft animatronics and design concepts for future restaurants.

The creative process makes for one-of-a-kind attractions/restaurants, but it takes time and money. The creation of a single concept can take years from the time an idea is first conceived until a location actually opens. For example, in crafting Rainforest Cafe, Schussler says he spent countless hours observing tropical birds, "learning about their environment, deforestation and the plight of endangered exotic animals."

"It costs money to have people research. It costs money to build and



Steven Schussler founded Schussler Creative in 2000 in Golden Valley, Minnesota.



Schussler's newest creative masterpiece is T-Rex. In addition to animatronic dinosaurs, T-Rex features an ice cave, geysers, a fossil dig site, waterfalls and a 5,000-gallon shark tank.

create," he says. "So research and development is ingenuity, but it's also, to a great degree, how much money you spend."

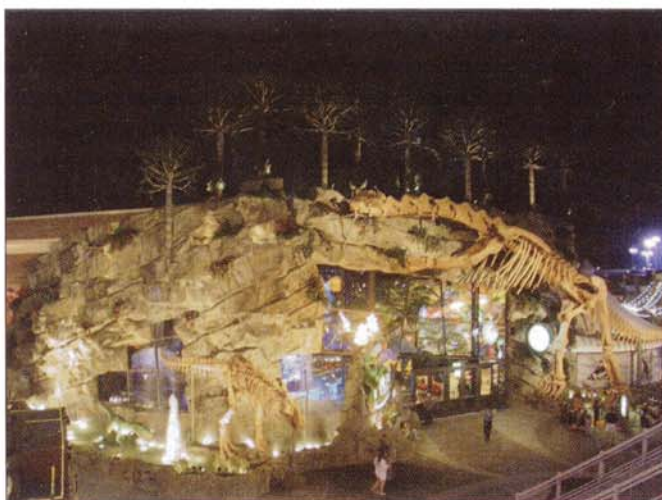
Best known for Rainforest Cafe — which features waterfalls, foliage, fish tanks, mechanical snakes and alligators, and a talking animatronic tree — Schussler's newest creative masterpiece is T-Rex. This July, Schussler and Landry's joined forces again to open the new concept at The Legends in Kansas City, Kansas. Touted as "A Prehistoric Family Adventure: A Place to Eat, Shop, Explore and Discover," the 20,000-square-foot location recreates different environments in which dinosaurs existed. But, notes Schussler, "just because it's called T-Rex doesn't mean it's all about dinosaurs. It's about water, fire, and ice." For example,

in addition to animatronic dinosaurs, T-Rex features an ice cave, geysers, a fossil dig site, waterfalls and a 5,000-gallon shark tank. And that's just the attraction portion of T-Rex. The restaurant portion features the "Kitchen of Fire," an open-air

kitchen with open-hearth ovens, rotisseries and wood-fired grills, and a retail portion where children can, among other things, create their own stuffed dinosaurs in the Build A Dino (by Build A Bear Workshop) area.

Since both the Rainforest Cafe and T-Rex feature three different components, their facilities managers must juggle the retail and restaurant portions along with the special challenges of the attraction component. As such, T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe have facilities managers, along with two or three assistants, at each location.

"There aren't many restaurants in the world that have their own in-house facilities team," notes Schussler. "But remember, it's an attraction which just happens to have retail and restaurant in it. All of those components are different and each one has its



The restaurant portion of T-Rex features the "Kitchen of Fire," an open-air kitchen with open-hearth ovens, rotisseries and wood-fired grills.



Above: The Octopus Bar at a T-Rex restaurant.



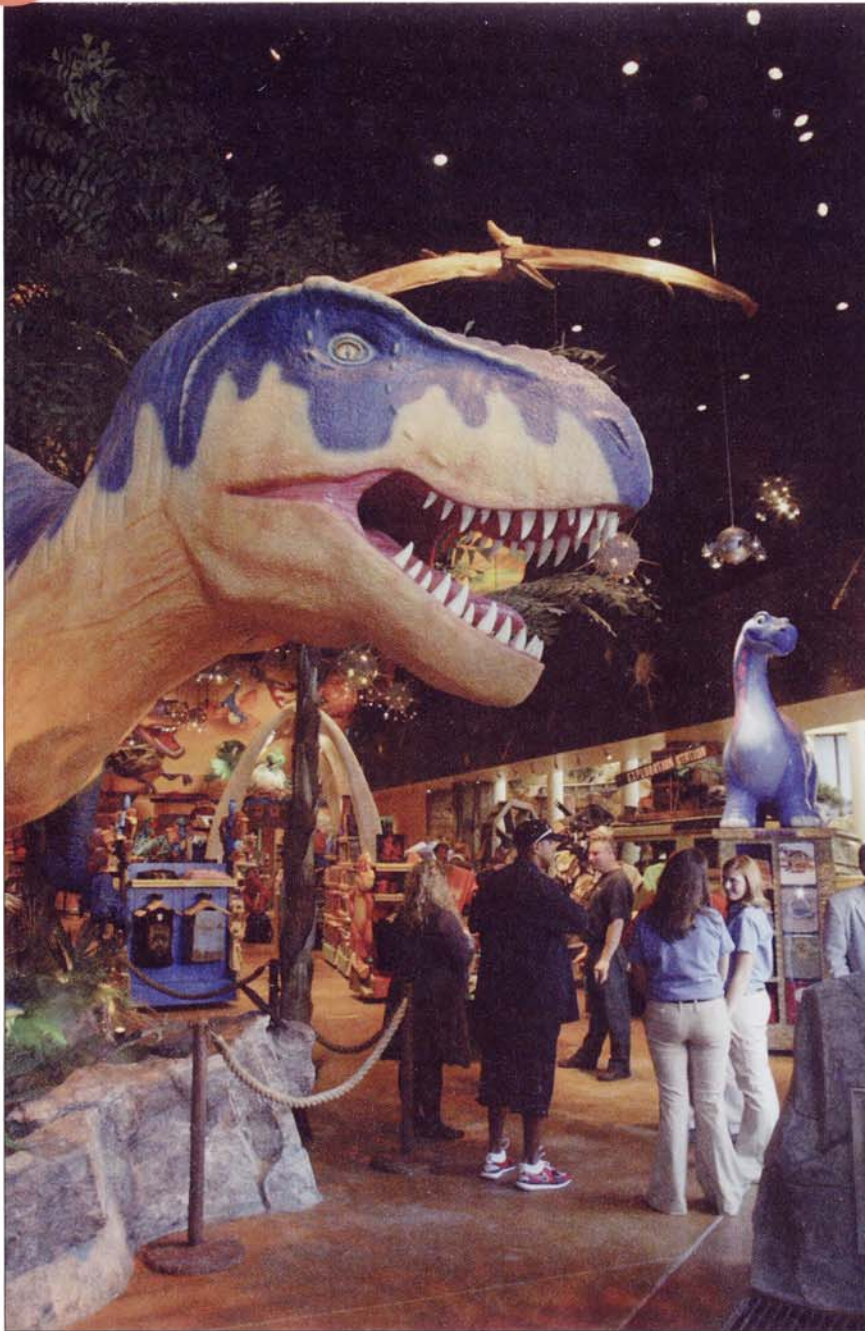
Outside T-Rex.

unique challenges.”

This combination of retail, restaurant and attraction also makes for long hours. In addition to normal restaurant business hours, T-Rex is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. for school field trip visits. “We’re open 18 hours a day, 7 days a week — forever,” says Schussler.

With such long hours and large facilities, preventive maintenance and a well trained staff are of paramount importance. Each location’s facilities manager and crew are trained by vendors to handle the myriad challenges that they will face. “They’re trained to take care of fish, mists, waterfalls, pumps, motors, lighting equipment, HVAC, all of the theatrical equipment, everything,” says Schussler. “It’s a pretty comprehensive system.”

The advantages of a well trained in-house facilities staff became apparent almost as soon as the first Rainforest Cafe opened. Five months



To juggle the retail, restaurant and attraction aspects of each location, both T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe have their own facilities managers, along with two or three assistants, at each location.

after the flagship Mall of America location opened in 1994, Schussler received a call at about 4 a.m. on Easter morning informing him that one of the store's fish tanks had exploded and, "all of the fish and merchandise were swimming through the mall," he says. Despite the calamity, the story had a happy ending.

"Because we had such a great facil-

ities team and such great teamwork, we were up and running and open for business at 11 a.m. and no one knew what had happened," he says. "Can you imagine trying to call a vendor at four in the morning to help you fix an exploding fish tank?"

The moral of the story, says Schussler, is that, "it's impossible to predict what is going to happen in a

facility. So, by having your own crew, you determine your own destiny."

Although maintenance emergencies can't always be avoided, Schussler points out that a lot of headaches can be sidestepped with foresight and upfront planning. "We get facilities management people involved in the development process and listen to their ideas," he says. "We'll choose what we do with the consideration of making it as simple as possible to maintain. It's the smartest way to build."

The construction of each new location also provides the chance to learn from and correct past mistakes. "It's very important that we continually update, change and fine-tune everything that we do to make sure that our guests are happy and also so that we build the second, third, fourth and twentieth locations with everything we've learned," says Schussler.

And there's plenty more to come from Schussler and his team. There are plans to open the next T-Rex location at Disney World's Animal Kingdom and then roll out seven more locations in the U.S. and 10 internationally. Not one to rest on his laurels, Schussler already has several other concepts in the works that he hopes to open in 2008. He and his team are currently working on an upscale China-themed restaurant that centers on the Qing Dynasty period and features huge ivory and elephant bone figures. Aeroblu, a concept with the tagline "spirit of cool," is based on the Paris nightclub scene circa 1939 to 1959. One of the restaurant's highlights will be a DC-3 airplane, which will be lowered from the ceiling and from which a saxophonist will emerge. Hot Dog Hall of Fame, a brand Schussler hopes to license to stadiums and airports, will feature hot dogs, dumplings, sausages and french fries from all over the world.

"I believe that creativity is the engine of success," says Schussler. "I also believe that only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." 